



**Department of the Navy
Civilian Benefits Center**
Benefits Bulletin 2011-10

**Federal Flexible Spending
Account Open Season**
November 14 – December 12, 2011

The Federal Benefits Open Season will run from November 14 through December 12, 2011. During the Open Season you can make changes to your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB), Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) and Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS) enrollment.

This bulletin discusses FSAFEDS Open Season. Refer to Bulletin 2011-8 for information about FEHB Open Season and Bulletin 2011-9 for information about FEDVIP Open Season.

Bulletin Highlights

- If you want to participate in FSAFEDS during 2012, you must make an election with SHPS during the Open Season.
- Estimate health care expenses carefully when making your election since any money remaining in your FSAFEDS account after the benefits period is forfeited.
- If you retire or separate during the Benefit Period you can be reimbursed only for health care expenses incurred prior to separation.

FSAFEDS Program Overview

A Flexible Spending Account (FSA) can help you save money by allowing you to set aside pre-tax funds to pay for eligible out-of-pocket health care and dependent care expenses. The amount you elect to contribute to your FSA account is deducted from your bi-weekly pay check.

The FSAFEDS Benefit Period is the calendar year plus a 2 ½ month grace period. You have until March 15, 2013 to incur eligible expenses. You must submit those claims by April 30, 2013. You will FORFEIT any money that you do not use in your FSA account(s) by April 30, 2013. This is known as the “use or lose” rule. Be sure to carefully plan how much money to contribute to your account(s). The FSAFEDS Calculator at https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/fsa_calculator.asp can help you calculate allotments based on your individual situation, as well as indicate your potential tax savings.

There are 3 types of FSA accounts available under FSAFEDS:

1. The Health Care Flexible Spending Account (HCFSA), which can be used to pay for qualified medical costs and health care expenses that are not paid by your FEHB plan or any other insurance. The minimum you may elect each year is \$250 and the maximum is \$5,000. If you are eligible for the FEHB Program and are an active employee you are eligible to participate in a HCFSA. You need only be eligible to participate in FEHB — you do not need to be currently enrolled.
2. The Limited Expense Health Care Flexible Spending Account (LEX HCFSA) is available only to employees who enroll in an FEHB High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a Health

Savings Account (HSA) or whose spouse is enrolled in a non-FEHB HDHP with an HSA. Eligible expenses are limited to dental and vision care services/products that meet the IRS definition of medical care. The minimum you may elect each year is \$250 and the maximum is \$5,000.

3. The Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA), is used to pay for eligible child care or adult dependent care expenses for qualified dependents that are necessary to allow you or your spouse to work, look for work, or attend school full-time. The minimum you may elect each year is \$250 and the maximum is \$5,000 per household (\$2,500 if married, filing separately). If you are an active employee you are eligible to participate in a DCFSA. The only exception(s) are intermittent or "when actually employed" (WAE) employees who are expected to work less than six months in a calendar year.

You may review an extensive list of eligible expenses for the Health Care, Limited Expense, and Dependent Care FSAs by visiting the Eligible Expenses Juke Box at <https://www.fsafeds.com/fsafeds/EligibleExpenses.asp>.

Additional information about FSAFEDS is available at <https://www.fsafeds.com/forms/OPM-FSA-OVTF-10-031.pdf>.

FSAFEDS Coverage After Retirement/Separation

If you retire/separate during the Benefit Period, you can only be reimbursed for eligible HCFSAs and LEX HCFSAs expenses incurred prior to your retirement/separation date. There are no extensions. You still have until April 30, 2013 to submit any eligible claims for those expenses. You can continue to use any remaining balance in your DCFSA to pay for eligible expenses until the end of the Benefits Period or until your account balance is used up, whichever comes first. You cannot make contributions to your FSAFEDS account after you retire/separate.

If you separate but return to work for another government agency your previous election will be reinstated as long as you return to work for an agency that is covered under FSAFEDS within 60 days of your separation and before the end of the same Benefit Period. You may not change the amount of your election, unless you have experienced a qualifying life event during that time of separation. You must notify FSAFEDS within 60 days of the event. If you return after 60 days of your separation within the same Benefit Period, OR in a subsequent Benefit Period, you will have an opportunity to make a new election. It is your responsibility to notify FSAFEDS if you are leaving, transferring, or re-joining a Federal agency that participates in FSAFEDS.

Action Required During Open Season

If you want to continue your FSAFEDS enrollment in 2012. You MUST make a new election during the Open Season. Enrollment in FSAFEDS does not carry over from year to year. To enroll in FSAFEDS go to <https://www.fsafeds.com> or call SHPS at 877-372-3337. You cannot enroll in FSAFEDS using the Employee Benefits Information System (EBIS).

If you want to cancel your current FSAFEDS enrollment. No action is required. If you do not make an election during the Open Season your enrollment will automatically terminate.

Effective Date of FSAFEDS Open Season Elections

The effective date of FSAFEDS Open Season elections is January 1, 2012.

The Leave and Earnings Statement you receive on January 20, 2012 will reflect the election you made during Open Season. It is your responsibility to review your Leave and Earnings Statement carefully to ensure your FSAFEDS election is being deducted from your pay. Report any errors immediately by calling SHPS.

Additional Information

Helpful Resources for Open Season at <http://www.opm.gov/retire/pubs/bals/2011/11-401attachment2.pdf>.

Circle 'Round Your Benefits - How to Get the Most Value From Your Benefits Programs at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/openseason/circle.pdf>.

Quick Guide to FEHB, FEDVIP, FLTCIP, FSAFEDS, and FEGLI at <http://www.opm.gov/insure/fastfacts/quickguide.pdf>.

Federal Benefits FastFacts: The 2011 Federal Benefits Open Season is Coming at <http://www.opm.gov/retire/pubs/bals/2011/11-404attachment4.pdf>.

Federal Benefits FastFacts: What to Consider During the Federal Benefits Open Season at <http://www.opm.gov/retire/pubs/bals/2011/11-404attachment5.pdf>

OPM Social Media

Get the latest information from OPM on the Federal Benefits Open Season by accessing their Facebook, Twitter and YouTube sites. You will find reminders, breaking information and items of interest about the health/dental/vision insurance and flexible spending accounts. You can access these sites at:

Facebook at www.facebook.com/fedbenefits. If Facebook is blocked at your agency, you can access it from other locations.

Twitter at <http://twitter.com/#!/fedretireinfo>.

YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/usopm>.

Questions About FSAFEDS

Additional information about FSAFEDS is available at <https://www.fsafeds.com/>. If you have questions about FSAFEDS call SHPS at 877-372-3337 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday to speak to a Customer Service Representative. Call center hours on the day after Thanksgiving (Friday, November 25) will be 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time. The call center is closed during weekends and on Thanksgiving. On Monday, December 12, (the last day of Open Season) the call center will be open 9:00 a.m. – midnight Eastern Time. The TTY number for the deaf and hard of hearing is 800-952-0450. You may also email any questions about FSAFEDS to FSAFEDS@shps.com.